

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

desire of offering up her own life for the salvation of souls the reformation of the Church. It is, indeed, piteous to see this exquisitely tender and angelical woman besieging Heaven with prayers for that grim and ruthless man whom she called "sweet Christ on earth," imploring God to look upon his good will, to hide him under the wings of His mercy so that enemies, the *iniqui superbi* may not be able to injure him, robe him with the purity of the faith, to give him light that the world may follow him, to temper his "virile heart" with holy humility. In the striking prayer composed on the feast of the Circumcision, probably that of 1380, when those "administer mysteries" began to work within her that finally delivered her from the world, we find Catherine including not only Urban, those very schismatics whom she had addressed as incarnate demons, men worthy of a thousand deaths; now her only thought is for the salvation of their souls, and she beseeches the God sovereign clemency to punish their sins upon her own body, last of the series consists of the words she uttered when regained consciousness on the Monday after Sexagesima, when her household were weeping for her as dead. It strikes the keynote of her passion, and seems, as it were, to sum up the aspirations of those weeks of prolonged suffering:—

"O eternal God, O divine Craftsman, who hast made, formed the vessel of the body of Thy creature of the dust of ground 1 O most sweet Love, Thou hast formed it of so vile thing, and hast put therein so great a treasure as is the soul which bears the image of Thee, eternal God. Thou, good Craftsman, my sweet Love, Thou art the potter who dost mar and mend again; Thou dost shatter and mend this vessel, as pleases Thy goodness. To Thee, eternal Father, I, wretched woman, offer anew my life for Thy sweet Spouse, that, as often as pleaseth Thy goodness, Thou mayest draw me from the body and restore to the body, each time with greater pain than the other; if I may see the reformation of this sweet Spouse, Thy holy Church I demand this Spouse of Thee, eternal God. Also, I commend Thee my most beloved children, and I beseech Thee, supri